

Frequently Asked Questions for Schools/Childcare - Monkeypox

What is Monkeypox/MPX?

Monkeypox is a rare disease caused by infection with the monkeypox virus (same family of viruses as smallpox). It can make you sick with a rash or sores and sometimes flu-like symptoms.

Symptoms are typically mild and, in most cases, go away on their own within a few weeks. Monkeypox is rarely fatal and over 99% of people who get it are likely to survive. As with many other illnesses, people with compromised immunity, children under age 8, people with history of eczema, pregnant or breastfeeding individuals have a higher risk of more serious illness. Antivirals, such as tecovirimat (TPOXX), may be recommended by a healthcare provider for people who are severely ill, or more likely to get severely ill, like patients with weakened immune systems.

How is it spread?

MPX can spread to anyone through close, personal, or skin-to-skin contact with someone who has MPX.

It can spread by:

- Direct skin-to-skin contact with monkeypox rash, sores, or scabs
- Contact with materials like clothing, bedding, or towels that have been used by someone with monkeypox
- By face-to-face contact through saliva or respiratory droplets

MPX has not been shown to be spread through brief casual contact, such as being in the same area, having casual conversation, or briefly touching shared items like doorknobs. People who do not have MPX symptoms cannot spread the virus to others.

What are the symptoms?

Typically, MPX presents with flu-like symptoms within 5 -21 days after being infected. A rash may develop within 1-3 days after a fever. However, in the current outbreak, many people are not experiencing the flu-like symptoms and the rash might be the first sign of the infection.

Sometimes, people get a rash first, followed by other symptoms and others only experience a rash. The illness typically lasts 2-4 weeks.

What should you do if you have symptoms?

Children and/or staff with fever and flu-like symptoms should stay home from daycare, school or work. Anyone with a new or unexplained rash should contact their healthcare provider or pediatrician, or the health department if they do not have one. These individuals should remain home and isolate until they have been examined by a healthcare provider.

What should you do if you test positive for MPX?

Children and/or staff that have tested positive for MPX should not attend daycare, school or work and should stay isolated until their rash has healed, all scabs have fallen off, and a fresh layer of intact skin has formed. This can take up to 2-4 weeks. Decisions to end isolation should be made in consultation with a pediatrician or healthcare provider. MPX is a reportable condition and any confirmed case can be reported to the Howard County Health Department's Surveillance line (410-313-1412).

What should you do if you are exposed to MPX?

Children and/or staff that have been in contact with someone confirmed to have MPX should monitor their symptoms for 21 days. At this time, they may still attend daycare, school or work as long as they are healthy and remain without symptoms. The Howard County Health Department is currently conducting extensive contact tracing. Anyone who is identified to be a contact is contacted by the health department and monitored for 21 days. Close contacts who meet certain criteria may be eligible for vaccination.

What can you do to protect yourself?

Vaccine is only available to certain identified high-risk individuals, but everyone can take these basic steps to protect themselves from monkeypox:

- Avoid close, skin-to-skin contact with people who have a rash that looks like monkeypox. Do not touch the rash or scabs of a person with monkeypox.
- Do not kiss, hug, cuddle, or have sex with someone with monkeypox.
- Do not share eating utensils or cups with a person with monkeypox.
- Do not handle or touch the bedding, towels, or clothing of a person with monkeypox.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- [Clean and disinfect](#) frequently touched surfaces.

Is there a vaccine in Maryland and can anyone get it?

Vaccine, which is the two-dose Jynneos vaccine, has been made available through the federal government and the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), but is currently in limited supply. Jynneos is licensed by the FDA for use in the prevention of smallpox or monkeypox in people ages 18 years and older. The CDC does not recommend widespread vaccination.

Based on CDC guidelines, state and local health officials are currently prioritizing vaccination courses for:

- Known close contacts who are identified by public health via case investigation, contact tracing, and risk exposure assessment
- Healthcare workers who may have been exposed to a known case or other laboratory staff working directly with monkeypox testing

Additional information can be found using the resources below:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: "Monkeypox:

<https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/index.html>

Maryland Department of Health: "Human Monkeypox"

<https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/OIDEOR/Pages/monkeypox.aspx>

Howard County Health Department Infection Prevention and Control Program: Monkeypox

<https://www.howardcountymd.gov/monkeypox>